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ATLANTA MAN INDICTED FOR STOLEN TAX PAYMENTS

Shepherd Worked at a Bank Responsible for Collecting Tax Payments to IRS

ATLANTA, GA - JASON SHEPHERD, 24, of Lithonia, Georgia, has been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of mail fraud, theft of government property, and aggravated identity theft, relating to a scheme to steal tax payments intended for the Internal Revenue Service. SHEPHERD made his initial appearance late today before United States Magistrate Judge E. Clayton Scofield.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of the case, "Our citizens expect that when they make their tax payments, those funds will go straight to the government and their tax obligations will be fulfilled. Any insider who has access to that payment system cannot help themselves to other people's tax money. When those entrusted to handle tax payments steal from the government, the innocent taxpayer pays the price, faith in the tax system is eroded, and the government loses tax revenue."

"Theft of payments processed through lockboxes results in lost tax revenue and can impact a taxpayer's account," said J. Russell George, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, whose office oversees the IRS. "Attempts to violate the integrity of federal tax administration face prosecution to the fullest extent of the law."

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: From approximately June to November 2009, SHEPHERD worked as a contractor at a Bank of America lockbox facility in Tucker, Georgia, which processes tax payments on behalf of the IRS. That lockbox banking facility, as a contractor for the IRS, must operate under specific guidelines in processing of tax payments for both individual and business tax filers. Taxpayers send their forms and tax payments to designated post office boxes which are accessible to the lockbox bank, and the bank collects and processes the forms and payments on behalf of the IRS.

The indictment alleges that SHEPHERD stole approximately 50 money orders totalling approximately \$25,000 from the lockbox facility which had been sent to the IRS

by taxpayers who were attempting to pay their tax liabilities. The money orders were allegedly altered and deposited into prepaid debit card accounts controlled by SHEPHERD. The indictment alleges that in one instance, SHEPHERD altered a money order and negotiated it himself at a local Post Office.

SHEPHERD is charged with mail fraud, aggravated identity theft, and theft of government property. The mail fraud charges each carry a maximum sentence of 30 years in prison, and a fine of up to \$1,000,000. The aggravated identity theft charges require a mandatory minimum 2 year sentence in addition to any other sentence imposed. The theft of government property charge carries a maximum sentence of 10 years and a fine of \$250,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment only contains charges. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA).

Assistant United States Attorney Nick Oldham is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.